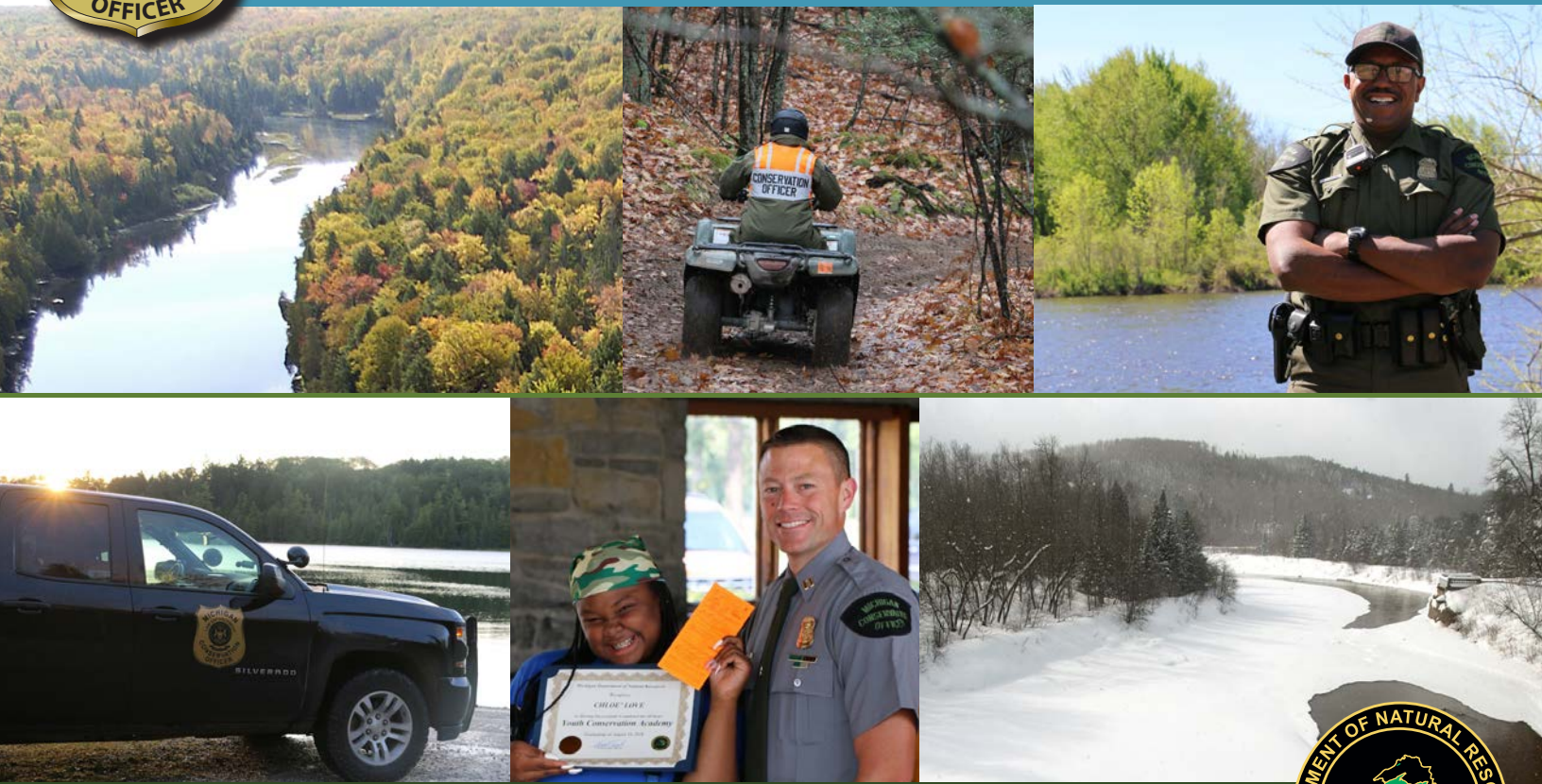




# Law Enforcement Division

2019 Annual Report



Michigan Department of Natural Resources



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The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is committed to the conservation, protection, management, use and enjoyment of the state's natural and cultural resources for current and future generations.

The mission of the Law Enforcement Division is to protect Michigan's natural resources and the environment, and the health and safety of the public through effective law enforcement and education.

# MESSAGE FROM CHIEF HAGLER



As Michigan's oldest statewide law enforcement agency, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Law Enforcement Division continues to expand its abilities to meet its unique law enforcement mission. With a mission to protect the natural resources and the health and safety of the public, conservation officers are being called upon, more now than ever, as first responders to a variety of natural disasters and emergencies.

Conservation officers are trained as game wardens, police officers and emergency responders. They have the knowledge, equipment and tools to navigate rural areas and difficult environments. During 2018, eight conservation officers received the Department of Natural Resources Law Enforcement Division Lifesaving Award. Additional officers were involved in lifesaving events throughout the year and will be considered for future awards.

Conservation officers have devoted their careers to being the front-line defenders of our natural resources – a commodity that, if lost, can't be regained. More than 97% of all contacts made by conservation officers during 2018 were education and outreach opportunities.

While they plan their day around enforcing laws related to fish and wildlife, state parks, trails and forests, and outdoor recreation activities, conservation officers adapt to meet the needs and concerns of stakeholders and citizens.

The fiscal year budget approved during 2018 authorizes 252 conservation officers – an all-time high for the division. This funding allows the division to maintain our strategically placed officers throughout the state. Conservation officers live in the communities they patrol and respond to complaints from the public, perform emergency police actions, respond to medical emergencies and safeguard our natural resources and the citizens who enjoy them.

I am proud of the work that our officers and civilian staff have done to support our mission. It's impossible to document all of the division's accomplishments in one report; however, the 2019 Law Enforcement Division annual report reflects achievements from each program area within the division.

Sincerely,

Chief Gary Hagler

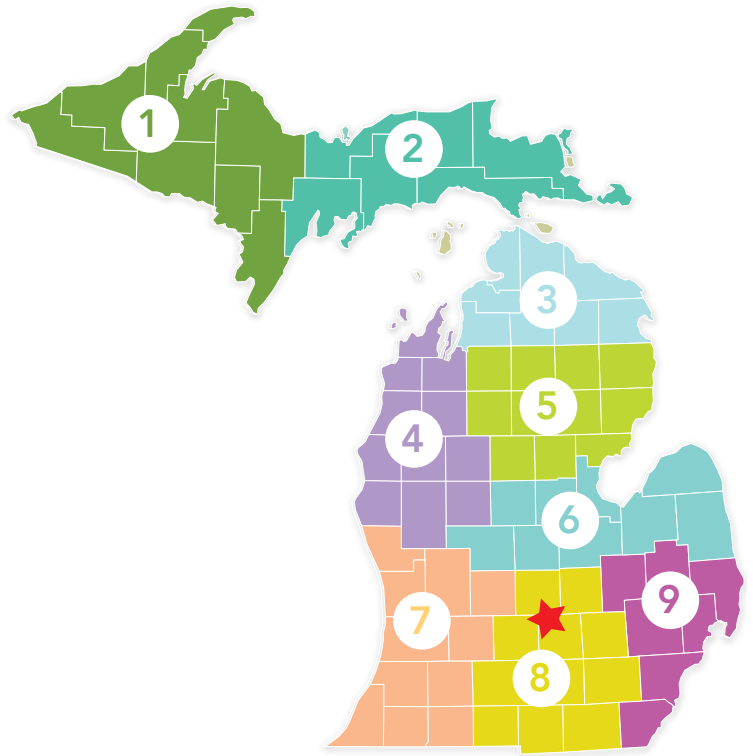


# ABOUT LED

## Division and districts

Conservation officers maintain a strong presence that spans every corner of Michigan and four of the five Great Lakes. Conservation officers and special investigators are assigned statewide to nine districts, ensuring the protection of Michigan's natural resources and the individuals enjoying them. This organizational structure encourages conservation officers to be part of the communities they serve and enhance their knowledge of an area's terrain, natural resources and people. Each district aligns with a Department of Natural Resources (DNR) customer service center.

The Law Enforcement Division (LED) headquarters in Lansing houses the division's top administrators, civilian support staff and communications center. From headquarters to the field, the men and women of the LED work together as a team to accomplish their mission.



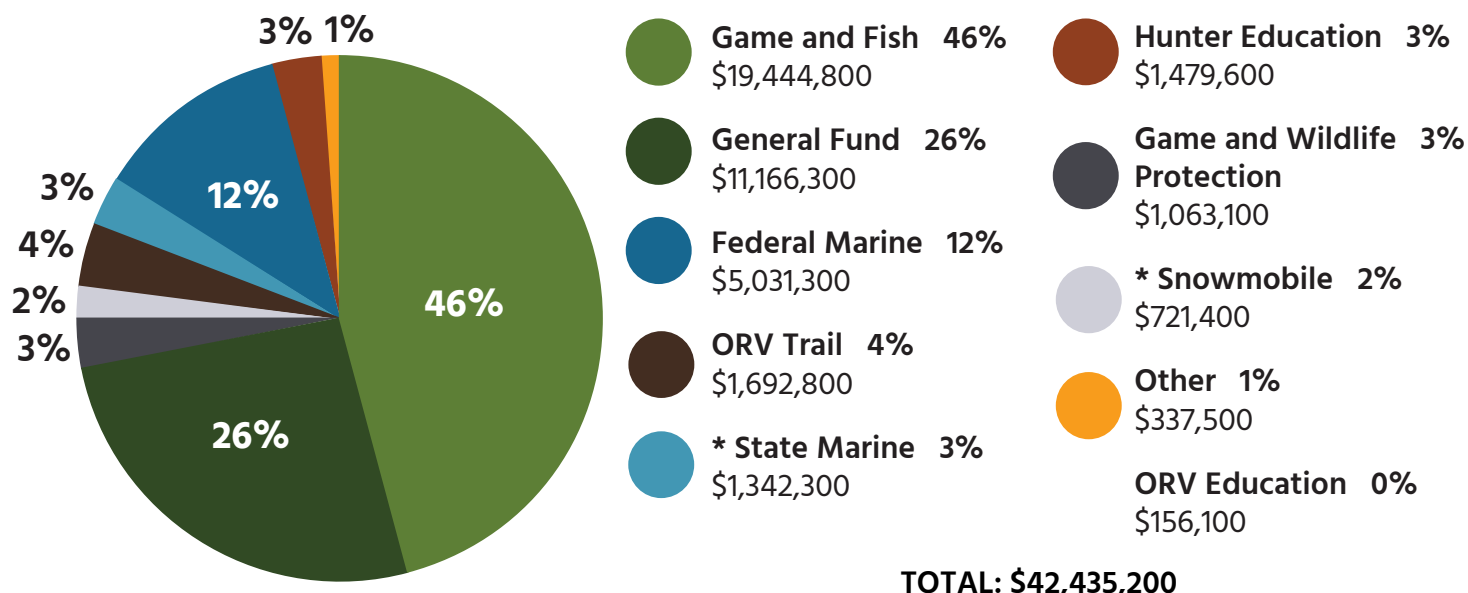
### REGION 1

- 1 Marquette Customer Service Center**  
1990 U.S. 41 S.  
906-228-6561
- 2 Newberry Customer Service Center**  
5100 State Highway M-123  
906-293-5131
- 3 Gaylord Customer Service Center**  
1732 W. M-32  
989-732-3541
- 4 Cadillac Customer Service Center**  
8015 Mackinaw Trail  
231-775-9727
- 5 Roscommon Customer Service Center**  
8717 N. Roscommon Road  
989-275-5151

### REGION 2

- 6 Bay City Customer Service Center**  
3580 State Park Drive  
989-684-9141
- 7 Plainwell Customer Service Center**  
621 N. 10th St.  
269-685-6851
- 8 Lansing Customer Service Center**  
4166 Legacy Parkway  
517-284-4720
- 9 Detroit Customer Service Center**  
1801 Atwater St.  
313-396-6890
- ★ HEADQUARTERS**  
**Lansing**  
525 W. Allegan St.  
517-284-6000





Game and Wildlife Protection includes the special investigations unit.

\* Funding source includes recreational education

	Hours Worked	Arrests	Complaints	Warnings	Contacts
Wildlife	*225,486	2,043	8,332	2,677	97,520
Fish		2,285	998	3,906	116,201
Privately Owned Cervidae (POC)	53	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Marine	40,264	1,416	552	4,208	90,458
Snowmobile	14,963	871	234	2,274	30,790
Off-Road Vehicle (ORV)	19,666	1,805	488	4,603	21,751
Environmental	582	109	231	112	1,049
Coastal Zone Management	398	2	0	0	78
Land/Water	3,023	452	1,011	992	17,250
Hunter Ed	12,337	n/a	n/a	n/a	18,839
Report All Poaching (RAP)	**n/a	n/a	6,787	n/a	Complaints Received
Training	79,727	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Administration	47,934	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Emergency Response	19,407	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
General Law	20,619	***1,294	793	4,771	49,165
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>258,973</b>	<b>10,277</b>	<b>19,426</b>	<b>23,543</b>	<b>443,101</b>

\* Wildlife Resource Protection Section Detective hours are figured into Wildlife totals.

\*\* RAP-communications staff hours are figured into the Administration totals.

\*\*\* This figure does not include 392 warrant arrests.



# RECREATIONAL SAFETY



Michigan requires a recreational safety certificate for people of certain ages to legally hunt, operate a boat, ORV or a snowmobile. LED manages Michigan's recreational education and safety programs and trains a network of more than 4,300 volunteer instructors – along with other initiatives to help people safely enjoy the outdoors.

Students have the option to complete their program of choice through the learning experience that suits them best, including the traditional face-to-face classroom experience, an online course or a combined online and classroom experience.

The DNR offers six safety certificates:

- Hunter safety
- Bowhunter education
- Trapper education
- Boater safety
- ORV safety
- Snowmobile safety

More than **49,000** people received a recreational safety certificate in 2018, including more than:

- **24,000** boater safety students
- **18,800** hunter safety students
- **4,600** ORV safety students
- **1,570** snowmobile safety students

The number of volunteers involved in recreational safety programs includes:

- **2,860** hunter safety program volunteers
- **700** boater safety volunteers
- **390** snowmobile safety volunteers
- **360** ORV safety volunteers
- **13%** of instructors were new volunteers







## Youth Conservation Academy returns to Detroit

Hunting and fishing are some of Michigan's favorite pastimes, traditionally passed down from generation to generation. LED is committed to educating tomorrow's leaders about the importance of the state's natural resources and how to enjoy them safely.

Organized by LED, the DNR Youth Conservation Academy returned to Detroit for its fourth year. The academy occurred one day per week for six weeks. Youth, ages 16-19, from Detroit and Saginaw rotated between activities at Belle Isle and the DNR Outdoor Adventure Center. Conservation officers, fish and wildlife biologists, geologists, foresters, historians, and marketing and outreach professionals educated youth about future career opportunities within the department. Additionally,

students were given the opportunity to participate in hands-on activities including: using clues to search for invasive species; an introduction to archery; developing a marketing campaign to promote a healthier environment; examining zebra mussels and other invasive species; identifying fish and their characteristics; and using a fish net to research shallow water habitats.

Each week, conservation officers instructed students about hunter safety. During the academy, 41 students were certified in hunter safety – receiving their hunter safety certificate upon graduation. Event sponsors donated fishing equipment. Each participant received a Michigan fishing license, fishing pole, landing net and a tackle box full of gear.

# MOTORIZED RECREATION



## Snowmobile

With more than 6,000 miles of maintained snowmobile trails, Michigan's unique snow conditions attract people from around the world. By the end of 2018, there were more than \*278,000 registered snowmobiles in Michigan.

Many communities in northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula rely on business generated from snowmobilers to sustain local economies. With half of Michigan's snowmobile trails navigating through private property, it is important to maintain positive landowner relationships. In recent years, excessive noise and trespassing complaints from landowners have resulted in the loss of over 400 miles of trails through private property.

Conservation officers use snowmobiles to conduct patrols to ensure snowmobilers are enjoying the sport safely and legally. Snowmobiles allow conservation officers to navigate difficult terrain and remote areas, often to search for missing persons.

The International 500 Snowmobile Race in Sault Ste. Marie celebrated its 50th anniversary during 2018. Snowmobile enthusiasts from around the world visited the area in attempt to break the Guinness World Record for the most snowmobiles in a parade. Conservation officers prepared for the extra snowmobilers by adding officers to the area for an increased patrol presence. During the I-500 race weekend, conservation officers

patrolled more than 650 miles on the local trails and received positive feedback and appreciation from the community for their efforts. Conservation officers contacted more than 1,075 riders during the weekend of the event, helping to create a safe riding environment.

During 2018, a conservation officer and a U.S. Forest Service officer responded to a call in Schoolcraft County regarding an injured snowmobiler who was located about a mile from the nearest accessible trail or road. Deep snow prohibited the use of conventional vehicles – only first responders with snowmobiles could access the area. As the first emergency responders on scene, the officers provided first aid to the victim and developed a plan to evacuate the rider from the woods. When the rescue sled arrived, the two officers transitioned care of the victim to the paramedics. The conservation officer continued to assist by riding ahead of the rescue sled to pack a smooth path that led to the nearest helicopter landing zone.



## Marine

In December 2018, there were more than \*941,000 total watercraft registered in Michigan – a 5% increase from January 2018. In addition, there are countless kayaks, canoes, paddleboats and other watercraft that are not required to be registered and are growing in popularity. Conservation officers use patrol boats and receive water rescue training to protect the natural resources and





ensure the safety of those recreating on and near the Great Lakes, more than 36,000 miles of rivers and streams and 11,000-plus inland lakes.

Conservation officers support national water safety campaigns, including National Safe Boating Week (a national campaign in May that promotes boating and life jacket safety) and Operation Dry Water (a national campaign that takes place around the July Fourth holiday to reduce the number of alcohol- and drug-related fatalities on the water). Collaborating with local law enforcement agencies, conservation officers conduct marine patrol at local events such as the National Cherry Festival in Traverse City, U.S. Coast Guard Festival in Grand

Haven, Bud Bash at Houghton Lake, Jobbie Nooner at Lake St. Clair, Hardigras near White Cloud and numerous other events.

In June 2018, a conservation officer saved a man during a fatal kayak incident on Lake Michigan, offshore from Manistique. Using a department-issued personal watercraft, the conservation officer was the first emergency responder to arrive on scene and was able to rescue one of the two capsized kayakers. The conservation officer made several dive attempts to reach the remaining submerged kayaker until a dive team arrived and was able to retrieve the body from 8-10 feet of water.

## ORV

With the increased popularity of side-by-side ORVs, more people have access to enjoy the state's natural resources – meaning there are more people on ORV trails, forest roads and other approved routes. During the 2018 license year, more than 246,000 ORV permits were sold in Michigan.

Speed, careless and reckless driving, and failure to yield were the primary contributing factors for reported ORV accidents in 2018. Of the ORV accidents reported, 33% were a result of people driving too fast – a 9% increase from 2017.

Conservation officers enforce ORV state laws and varying local rules and regulations on state and federal lands, year-round. This includes 3,660 miles of state ORV trails and several scramble areas. Additionally, conservation officers receive unique ORV training to enhance their skills and abilities, including speed enforcement training and tactical operation. ORVs allow conservation officers to navigate difficult terrain to protect the natural resources and perform rescue operations.



During 2018, a conservation officer and local law enforcement officer responded to a critically injured ORV rider. The rider lost control when going around a curve and was ejected from his ORV, struck several trees and was knocked unconscious. Other riders went back and forth looking for him, passing the unconscious rider several times because he was thrown so far off the road. The officers rode their ORVs for 15 minutes to reach the scene and were the first emergency responders to arrive. The conservation officer provided first aid to the critically injured rider until EMS arrived and the rider was transported by helicopter to a trauma center.

# REPORT ALL POACHING

The Michigan DNR Report All Poaching (RAP) hotline is answered by the LED Communications Center and serves as the statewide DNR dispatch. Utilizing public safety technology similar to what 911 centers use, the Michigan DNR Communications Center is a leader among North American conservation law enforcement agencies. Dispatchers field statewide calls from the public, conservation officers and other law enforcement agencies. Topics range from injured wildlife to illegally killed game. The dispatcher immediately communicates the violation and information to local conservation officers for investigation. Upon the request of an officer, dispatchers also query state and federal databases for vehicles, persons and articles that have been stolen or have a wanted status, as well as checking for recreational licenses and prior citations.

This is the first calendar year that the RAP hotline utilized technology to receive complaints via text. In 2018, the RAP hotline staff:

- **Answered 33,637 calls.**
- **Received 6,787 criminal complaints – 7% received by text.**
- **Initiated 135 criminal complaints through social media investigations.**



In January 2018, a final disposition was reached regarding a case in Barry County. The case began as a complaint to the RAP hotline about an illegally discarded deer carcass. As a result of the complaint, two suspects were identified. During the investigation of the first suspect – who was charged for taking an over-limit of deer – a second suspect was identified. The second suspect was hunting with a revoked license and also killed an over-limit of deer. The second suspect had his license revoked for an additional seven years and was ordered to pay nearly **\$32,000**, which included reimbursement for the illegally taken deer, fines and court costs, in addition to serving 60 days in jail. While awaiting sentencing, a new poaching complaint was generated, which led back to the second suspect. The court assessed the second suspect to pay an additional **\$10,250** in reimbursement and revoked the individual's hunting license for a total of 10 years.

**CALL OR TEXT**  
**1-800-292-7800**





# EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

LED is tasked with the department's responsibilities under the Michigan Emergency Management Plan, working closely with the Michigan State Police Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division (EMHSD) and other state agencies to safeguard the welfare of the citizens and visitors of Michigan. LED provides support to the State Emergency Operations Center during emergency activations, participates in exercises and develops all hazard response plans and procedures in collaboration with the EMHSD, state, local, tribal and federal partners.

Residents of Houghton County awoke on Father's Day 2018 to devastation that was the first of its kind to hit the region. The June 17 storm created a 1,000-year flood, washing out everything in its path, including roads, recreation trails, homes, businesses and other infrastructure. Small creeks and ditches turned into rapid waters, filled with debris, funneling into the Portage Lake area.

A group of five conservation officers were returning to the area after a remote patrol on Isle Royale. As the officers neared the north entry to Portage Lake, they discovered the devastation and



Photo: Conservation Officer Dave Miller helps deliver water to volunteers.

immediately transitioned into emergency response mode. As they neared town, the officers used the rescue equipment they had available to assist residents trapped in their homes. Once they were able to retrieve additional DNR patrol boats, the officers patrolled the Portage waterway system, collecting boats, canoes, kayaks, paddle boards and other debris that had been swept into the lake.

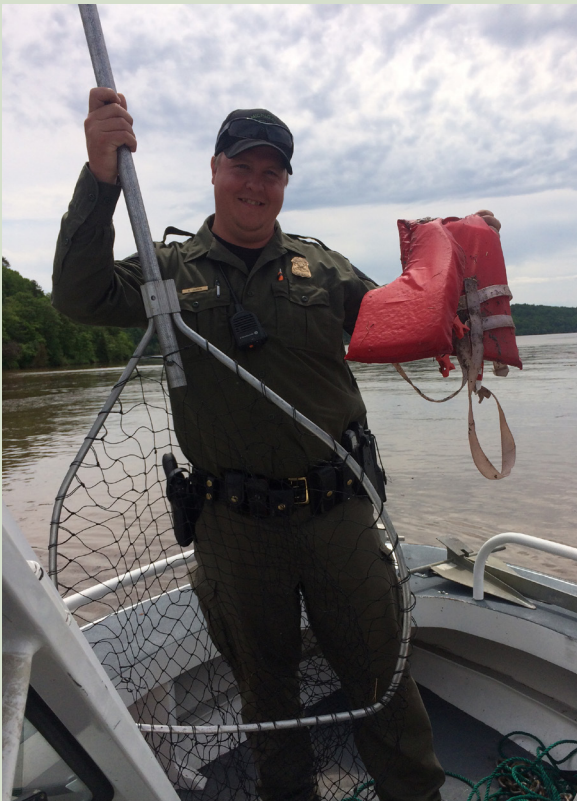


Photo: Conservation Officer Brian Lasanen collects debris that was swept into Portage Lake during the 1,000-year flood.

Conservation officers continued to provide emergency management and response by setting up signs and barricades and conducting patrols to ensure that nobody went onto the damaged trails. In town, conservation officers utilized their four-wheel-drive and off-road vehicles to help the American Red Cross navigate the impassable roads to deliver water and meals to volunteers.

As a result of their emergency response training and equipment, conservation officers were able to navigate the washed-out areas that were unreachable by other first responders. As the community continues to rebuild, local conservation officers still patrol the closed recreation areas to prevent additional trail damage and ensure safety.



# ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION



## Investigations

The DNR LED manages the Environmental Investigations Section (EIS), funded by the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE). Detectives respond to scenes of major environmental investigations and conduct criminal investigations for EGLE. Investigations are based on criminal activity around environmental law violations, including littering on public lands, illegal disposal of solid waste and illegal tire disposal.

During 2018, EIS detectives investigated an abandoned 76-foot vessel, located offshore of

Ludington State Park. Purchased in Florida, the vessel was not deemed seaworthy. The owner invested in making minimal repairs before bringing the vessel into the Great Lakes through the Mississippi River. As the vessel neared Ludington, it began taking on water. The owner beached the vessel and refused to pay for tow-boat services – claiming that he did not have enough money. Within days of being abandoned, the vessel began to break apart and leak fluids into Lake Michigan. When contacted to clean up the site, the owner continuously refused to return to the location or pay for cleanup services. The U.S. Coast Guard hired an environmental contractor to remove the vessel's debris and fluids, and clean the water. Ludington State Park hired environmental contractors to complete the cleanup with park staff. As a result of the EIS investigation, the court ordered the owner to pay more than **\$116,860** in fines and cleanup reimbursement to Ludington State Park.



## Wetlands

Wetlands are important connectors between land and water. Conservation officers are responsible for protecting game and fish habitats, including wetlands. Wetlands are some of the most rich and productive ecosystems, providing habitat and nursery space for young fish, migratory birds and other wildlife including many rare and endangered species. Wetlands provide flood and erosion control by absorbing stormwater runoff and clean water by filtering out pollutants and sediment.

Conservation officers work with EGLE to conduct investigations and determine if illegal activity affected wetlands.

During 2018, two contractors in Chippewa County pleaded guilty to violations of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act. The contractors were involved in illegal dredging and filling regulated wetlands without a permit, which damaged 18 acres of forested wetland and several streams. In addition, a civil suit was pursued by the States Attorney General's Office against the land owner that resulted in a fine and restoration of the property.



# LAND & WATER

## Land, water and air

Conservation officers patrol more than 9 million acres of land accessible to the public, including commercial forest lands, and provide special assistance to the DNR Forest Resources Division and Parks and Recreation Division. Most of the enforcement action includes violations such as illegal timber cutting, wildfire investigations, trespassing, illegal commercialization of forest resources, erosion caused by ORVs and illegal narcotics cultivation on state-owned land. Conservation officers also investigate dredging or filling of lakes and streams, including the alteration of the natural water flow and placing structures on bottomlands.

In 2018, a private landowner in Barry County decided to knock down an existing barn with the intent to build a new barn. Instead of properly disposing of the debris, the landowner lit it on fire, which required two fire departments to respond and several calls to the local 911 emergency system. As a result of the conservation officers' investigation, the suspect pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor solid waste disposal violation for open dumping and open burning. The court ordered the landowner to pay a fine and reimbursement to the fire departments and court.

## Coastal zone management

Michigan's Great Lakes are home to 1,500 shipwrecks and 14 underwater preserves, which offer recreational divers freshwater diving opportunities. It is illegal to remove anything from underwater shipwrecks.

*"Shipwrecks are irreplaceable resources. They cannot be regenerated," said Wayne Lusardi, a state maritime archaeologist with the DNR's Michigan History Center. "Unlike any other place in the world, Michigan's fresh water allows for shipwrecks and other historical resources to be uniquely preserved."*

In September, two recreational divers notified LED's Great Lakes Enforcement Unit (GLEU) that people were stealing internal framework – referred to as "ribbing" – from the Metropolis, a shipwreck north of Traverse City. The ship was abandoned after becoming lost in a snowstorm in November 1886.

Using the information provided by the divers, conservation officers were able to identify and locate the suspects. As a result, both of the suspects gave full confessions to the conservation officers and returned the stolen artifacts, in addition to paying fines and restitution and performing community service hours.

Photo: Conservation Officer Sean Kehoe with recovered ribbing from the Metropolis shipwreck.





# FISH & GAME

## Fish

Fishing in Michigan offers a unique, freshwater experience with more than 150 fish species. Michigan conservation officers are responsible for protecting these species through education and enforcement. Conservation officers help preserve the sport and industry for future generations through education and outreach, license enforcement, targeted fish patrols and bait dealer inspections. Working closely with tribal authorities, conservation officers help ensure the rights and regulations established in treaties and consent decrees are honored.



A complaint was called in to the RAP hotline about a group of people illegally taking salmon from a closed stream on private property in Manistee County. A DNR fisheries biologist indicated this small tributary stream is critical for producing wild chinook salmon smolts to the Little Manistee River.

A team of conservation officers located the suspects and setup a surveillance of the area. During the surveillance,

conservation officers witnessed multiple people illegally netting and snagging fish.

When conservation officers contacted the group they located dozens of illegally taken salmon. As a result of the investigation, it was determined the group had been targeting this small stream, taking an estimated 240 illegal fish over eight years. Five people were charged with seven violations during this incident,

and all pleaded guilty. Several thousand dollars in fines and costs were paid, in addition to **\$1,400** in reimbursement.

The incident was recorded by the Outdoor Channel and showcased on the Wardens television show.





## Game

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) created new challenges for conservation officers during the 2018 deer hunting seasons. The core CWD area consisted of five counties, with a baiting ban in effect for a total of 16 counties in the Lower Peninsula. In the Upper Peninsula, portions of Dickinson and Menominee counties that border Wisconsin were considered the core CWD surveillance area, with expanded surveillance in three adjacent counties.

Receiving numerous complaints regarding illegal baiting, conservation officers made 44 arrests related to CWD baiting and feeding violations within the CWD core management zone during 2018. Responding to major regulation changes with a positive attitude, conservation officers worked to provide the public with current information regarding rule changes by following a **"DEER"** strategy. Additionally, conservation officers were present at the DNR Wildlife deer check stations and scheduled bait enforcement flights in the core CWD area.



In Clinton County, local law enforcement requested the assistance of a conservation officer at the scene of a recreational trespass and possible illegal deer. Shortly after, a RAP complaint was

received about the same incident. When the conservation officer arrived on scene, he found evidence of trespassing and seized a processed antlerless deer carcass without a tag. Using the complainant's information and details, the conservation officer developed a suspect. Over the course of three months, the officer conducted multiple interviews and secured a search warrant for the suspect's Facebook profile. After sifting through over 6,000 pages, the officer was able to document 15 game violations, including seven illegally taken deer. The suspect was found guilty and ordered to pay fines and costs of **\$1,450** and **\$5,000** in reimbursement. In addition, his hunting privileges were revoked for three years.

Photos: Both photos were obtained after searching through more than 6,000 pages from the suspect's Facebook profile.

## "DEER"

**D**etecting incoming deer from CWD-positive states by conducting increased patrols, enforcement, surveillance and inspection in counties that border the state lines.

**E**ducating the public and answering questions during public speaking events, working with deer processors, constituent groups and when contacting hunters in the field.

**E**nforcing regulations when encountering violations pertaining to various bans, including importation, transportation, feeding and baiting.

**R**esponding to all complaints of suspected CWD-positive deer and following decontamination protocols, including collecting all possible carcass remains and transporting remains to the lab for testing and incineration.





## Waterfowl

Michigan's Wetland Wonders include the seven premier managed waterfowl hunt areas in the state. The areas are funded by hunting license fees, but they are open for anyone to visit, use and enjoy most of the year. Resource protection is important to preserve our waterfowl hunting heritage.

During the 2018 waterfowl season, conservation officers wrote 321 waterfowl violations in Michigan. Among the states in the Mississippi Flyway Council, Michigan ranked in the top half for total waterfowl arrests. The division credits part of this achievement to its weeklong waterfowl enforcement training for new officers and ongoing education provided to all officers.

## Commercial fish

Conservation officers in the Great Lakes Enforcement Unit (GLEU) receive specialized training to patrol commercial fishing activity on the Great Lakes and for the wholesale fish industry. This includes inspecting vessels and commercial fishing facilities on land. GLEU works closely with tribal enforcement officers, federal agencies and Canadian authorities to enforce state and tribal commercial fish regulations, including the illegal taking of fish, syndicated commercialization and net inspections.



GLEU corporals collaborated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on a federal, multistate undercover investigation called "Fishing for Funds." The agencies investigated the illegal commercialization of fish from the Great Lakes.

As a result of the two-year undercover Fishing for Funds investigation, a state-licensed wholesaler from Ludington pleaded guilty in

federal court during 2018. The individual was sentenced to four months in federal prison and ordered to pay **\$270,000** in reimbursement for selling over 5,000 pounds of illegally harvested lake trout and falsifying records. The investigation is ongoing as individuals continue to be prosecuted.





## Privately owned cervidae

As part of a joint program with the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, the DNR is responsible for managing privately owned cervidae (POC) registration in Michigan. Breeding POC facilities raise deer, elk, reindeer and moose. Game ranch POC facilities offer paying customers the opportunity to hunt cervidae species.

Conservation officers serve a vital role in ensuring that all deer and elk in Michigan are protected, no matter what side of the fence they are on. Responsible for routine facility checks, conservation officers conduct fence inspections and review records and registration. When necessary, conservation officers conduct enforcement if legal action is brought against a POC. Proper maintenance of POC facilities is critical to protecting Michigan's free-ranging and POC herds.

After submitting two deer heads that tested positive for chronic wasting disease (CWD), conservation officers began investigating a registered POC game ranch owner in Mecosta County. The investigation revealed that the owner provided false information regarding the origin of the CWD-positive deer heads and failed to maintain fencing.

As a result, the ranch owner was sentenced to 60 days in jail for each count, ordered to pay **\$775** in fines and costs and perform 80 hours of community service. Placed under quarantine, the facility's remaining deer were depopulated and tested – no further evidence of CWD was found.



## Aquatic invasive species

Aquatic invasive species (AIS) pose a threat to the Great Lakes and Michigan's more than 11,000 inland lakes and over 36,000 miles of rivers and streams. Conservation officers work with state and federal partners to prevent the spread of AIS through education and enforcement of laws prohibiting or restricting possession of species, and new laws requiring boaters to clean and drain watercraft and trailers before transport.

In July 2018, conservation officers in St. Clair County seized more than 2,000 pounds of live, illegal red swamp crayfish – the largest aquatic invasive species seizure by the Michigan DNR.

Red swamp crayfish burrow in shorelines, creating erosion that results in bank instability. They outcompete native crayfish and reduce the amount of food and habitat available for native amphibians, invertebrates and juvenile fish. These aquatic invasive species are prohibited in both Michigan and Canada.

U.S. Customs and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service contacted conservation officers when Canadian officials at the Sarnia, Ontario, border crossing denied a commercial hauler entry into Canada. Conservation officers stopped the truck and obtained 55 bags of live red swamp crayfish. After interviewing the driver, the officers learned the truck originated from Canada and made stops in Maryland and Arkansas to pick up cargo prior to attempting its return to Canada. The driver did not have appropriate records. The case was transitioned to GLEU for further investigation.



# GENERAL PUBLIC SAFETY & RESPONSE

As fully certified peace officers, conservation officers enforce all of the state's laws. Conservation officers are a critical part of local law enforcement networks, especially in rural areas. Often when you dial 911 in some counties in Michigan, a conservation officer is the first emergency responder on the scene. Conservation officers manage a variety of crimes and arrests, including property crimes, felony arrests and motor vehicle enforcement. During 2018, conservation officers made more than 1,290 general criminal arrests, including over 390 warrant arrests.

In December, a statewide Amber Alert was issued for two teenage girls, ages 13 and 14, when they didn't return home from Cadillac Junior High School. While conducting routine patrol in the Village of Kalkaska, a conservation officer saw a vehicle that matched the description provided in the bulletin. The conservation officer followed the driver and confirmed the vehicle and license plate information.

Requesting assistance from local law enforcement, the conservation officer followed the vehicle into a grocery store parking lot. The officer activated his patrol truck emergency lights, directing the vehicle to stop, but the suspect continued driving. Backup officers arrived and helped the conservation officer safely stop the vehicle. The 34-year-old man voluntarily surrendered, and the officers were able to place him in custody and safely confiscate his firearm.

The man was sentenced to between seven and 15 years in prison for three counts of third-degree criminal sexual conduct (CSC), 365 days in jail for fourth-degree CSC and fourth-degree child abuse and 90 days in jail for two counts each of harboring runaways and contributing to the delinquency of a minor, in addition to paying fines and court costs.

A conservation officer in Lake County responded to a 911 call where a woman was yelling for help, saying that her boyfriend was attempting to light her on fire. As the officer arrived on scene, he saw a flash of light near a trailer in the woods. The officer contacted a male suspect who was intoxicated and agitated, saying that his girlfriend was in the house, attempting to set it on fire. The officer observed heavy smoke coming out of the house. Not knowing the exact circumstances involved, the conservation officer attempted to handcuff the subject for his own safety. The subject resisted and after a short struggle, the conservation officer was able to handcuff the man and contact the fire department.

Putting their own safety at risk, the conservation officer and a Lake County Sheriff's deputy entered the smoke-filled residence, where they found a suicidal woman laying on a mattress and partially covered with blankets that were on fire. The woman was making no attempt to leave the residence or remove the burning materials as she was coughing and gagging with smoke inhalation. Aware that they did not have long before becoming overcome with smoke themselves, the two officers dragged the woman outside just prior to an explosion that consumed the inside of the residence with flames. The conservation officer provided first aid to the female until paramedics arrived and assisted the local sheriff with the investigation.



# SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS UNIT

LED Special Investigations Unit (SIU) detectives are conservation officers who investigate complaints of illegal commercialization of fish, game or natural resources, organized poaching operations and violations of threatened or endangered species laws.

Receiving advanced training, SIU detectives often work undercover and with investigators from other states to gather evidence of violations committed by suspects who cross state lines.

SIU detectives assisted the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources with a two-year investigation of two suspects who were conducting illegal guide activity at a resort located in northern Ontario. The investigation identified several natural resource violations in which the suspects were ordered to pay **\$16,875** in penalties. Additionally, the suspects are no longer allowed to issue hunting or fishing licenses at their resort and were mandated to successfully complete hunter safety.

Photo: A DNR evidence room with more than 1,000 pounds of wild game and fish. SIU detectives obtained the meat as evidence after executing a search warrant and locating six freezers stocked with illegal game and fish.





# TRAINING & EQUIPMENT



## Training

Conservation officers are some of the most highly skilled law enforcement officers in Michigan, receiving diversified and up-to-date training.

During 2018, Michigan conservation officers became federally certified to respond to active shooter attacks – enhancing their abilities to protect Michigan citizens. Certified by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the training was facilitated by a team of Michigan conservation officers that were certified in 2017 through Louisiana State University’s renowned Academy of Counter-Terrorist Education. The program has since been incorporated into the Law Enforcement Division’s Conservation Officer Academy curriculum to ensure all new officers receive this training.

- **232 conservation officers and command staff completed the intensive, 16-hour training at the Camp Grayling Joint Maneuver Training Center.**
- **Conservation officers are one of the few law enforcement agencies in Michigan to earn this certification.**
- **Training included the latest tactics for responding to attacks on locations like schools, places of worship and employment centers.**

Photo: Conservation Officer Mike Drexler works with a team of law enforcement officers during a suspected active shooter event on the University of Michigan campus in Ann Arbor. Photo credit: Jacob Hamilton/MLive Media Group © 2019 MLive Media Group. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission.

Conservation officers were among several law enforcement agency representatives to report as first responders to the March 2018 active shooter at Central Michigan University, where two homicides were committed in a campus dorm room. Conservation officers participated in the incident command center, assisted with security and utilized their special equipment to search for the shooter and the associated vehicles.

Eight conservation officers worked a total of 75 hours, responded to three complaints and contacted 27 individuals from the time the incident occurred, Friday at 9 a.m., through the closing press conference, Saturday at 10:30 a.m. Conservation officers located and secured the associated vehicles on the CMU campus, provided foot patrol on and off campus and utilized a side-by-side ORV and patrol vessel to help locate the shooter.







## Recruit School #9

One of the most selective law enforcement academies in Michigan, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Conservation Officer Academy graduated 24 new conservation officers in 2018. The new officers were selected from nearly 500 applicants to be a part of Recruit School #9 – the DNR’s 23-week training academy based in Lansing.

## Equipment

Conservation officers continue to adapt their skills and tools to incorporate emerging technology. Cell phones and social media have become useful in aiding conservation officers with investigations, search warrants and being more closely connected to data they need while in the field. Additionally, officers are now able to use mobile applications for photographic evidence collection.

One helpful tool is onXmaps, a mobile application that has been provided to all officers as a smartphone and desktop application. Conservation officers now can view property lines and ownership from the field as well as use the tool to create trails



and mark icons for reference and printable maps. The division is working closely with the DNR’s Resource Assessment Section to develop GIS tools that will expand officers’ abilities while in the field.

# SERVING COMMUNITIES



Recruit School #9 collected and donated more than 50 toys for the Toys for Tots Christmas Drive.



Recruit School #9 collected more than 1,300 non-perishable food items to contribute to the Michigan Harvest Gathering

Because conservation officers live in the communities they serve, they are expected to help create a positive impact and address community issues. The DNR Conservation Officer Academy instills in officers the value of being active members in the communities they serve. During 2018:

- **According to the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, 16% of people in Michigan are unsure of where their next meal will come from. Field officers donate edible game and fish seized or salvaged during the course of their workdays to needy individuals within their communities.**
- **Over 1,300 non-perishable food items were donated by Recruit School #9 to the Michigan Harvest Gathering – a campaign that donates to the Food Bank Council of Michigan, which supports nearly 3,000 community agencies throughout the state.**
- **More than 50 toys were donated for the Toys for Tots Christmas drive, sponsored by the United States Marine Corps. The toys were delivered by Recruit School #9 to the Salvation Army and donated to local children.**







Conservation Officers Andrea Albert and Steve Butzin rescued two people involved in a snowmobile accident that occurred in Antrim County.

(L:R): Chief Gary Hagler, Conservation Officer Andrea Albert, Conservation Officer Steve Butzin, Retired Asst. Chief Dean Molnar



Conservation Officers Sam Koscinski and Scott MacNeill rescued a woman who was stranded, tangled in fish hooks and clinging to a tree in the Manistee River.

Conservation Officer Mike Evink rescued a man whose kayak overturned in Lake Michigan.

Conservation Officer Jeff Panich rescued two individuals who were stranded, swimming in Tawas Bay, after they fell off their personal watercraft.

(L:R): Asst. Chief Steve Burton, Conservation Officer Scott MacNeill, Conservation Officer Mike Evink, Conservation Officer Jeff Panich, Conservation Officer Sam Koscinski, Chief Gary Hagler



Conservation Officers Dave Miller and Kyle McQueer saved a woman who had fallen off the side of a cliff near the village of L'Anse and was stranded, clinging to a tree.

(L:R): Chief Gary Hagler, Conservation Officer Dave Miller, Conservation Officer Kyle McQueer, Asst. Chief Steve Burton



**[Michigan.gov/ConservationOfficers](https://Michigan.gov/ConservationOfficers)**